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Certain statistics in reference to the flora are of general interest. The overwhelming preponderance of dicotyledons is shown in the following enumeration: dicotyledons 2109, monocotyledons 447, gymnosperms 11, pteridophytes 35. The largest families are Compositæ (328 spp.), Gramineæ (182), Leguminosæ (146), Caryophyllaceæ (141), Cruciferæ (139), Rosaceæ (124), Labiatæ (109), Umbelliferæ (109). Certain families are conspicuous by their poor representation, as Malvaceæ (11 spp.), Ericaceæ (14), Asclepiadaceæ (3), Polemoniaceæ (1), Acanthaceæ (1), Verbenaceæ (2). The large genera are Carex (55 spp.), Hieracium (38), Centaurea (35), Veronica (31), Ranunculus (29), Dianthus (27), Silene (27), Trifolium (27), and Galium (25). Aster is represented by but four species, and Solidago by one. Festuca is the largest genus of Gramineæ, and Verbascum of Scrophulariaceæ. Aside from the grasses and sedges, the monocotyledons form little more than 6 per cent. of the vascular flora.—J. M. C.

The flora of the West Indies.[3]

UNDER the editorship of Dr. Urban we are promised a valuable work on the flora of the West Indies. This very important region has been in the possession of so many governments that the literature of the flora is badly scattered. It is a great boon to botanists to have it brought together in compact form. The work will be of especial value to American botanists, who are largely interested in the study of the flora of Mexico and the Central American states.

This first part is by Dr. Urban himself, and is a remarkably complete and painstaking bibliography. Not only is the literature of the region presented, but under each title is a synopsis of the contribution, so that one may know just how important a publication each title represents. At the close of the part is a conspectus of the literature by islands and also by plant groups. It would seem as if any published botanical information in reference to any island or plant group can at once be discovered in this remarkable bibliography.

The work will be issued in parts at indefinite intervals, each part containing about 160 pages, and three parts forming a volume. The subscription price will vary from $2 to $3 for each part.—J. M. C.

Nature study.

THE increase of interest in nature study has called forth a large number of publications intended to assist teachers and pupils in this work. Many of these have been little more than compilations of fantastic stories about natural objects, made by persons with excellent imaginations and a little inaccurate information upon several scientific subjects. As a result nature study is looked upon, in some localities, as a rather frivolous pastime, which is not of any very great importance in the real business of education. There are several books, however, which do not attempt to show that all animate objects are spectacular, but rather attempt to direct attention to the manifestations of life in our everyday contact with it. It is to the latter kind of helps that Mr. D. Lange's excellent book belongs.[4]

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[3] URBAN, IGNATIUS: Symbolæ Antillanæ seu fundamenta floræ Indiæ occidentalis. Vol. I. Part I. Bibliographia Indiæ occidentalis botanica. 8vo. pp. 192. Fratres Borntraeger: Berolini. 1898. *M* 10.80.

The guiding principle of the book has been that pupils must see and examine real objects, not merely their pictures and descriptions. The lessons are planned with the idea of having pupils obtain their knowledge at first-hand so far as possible. Part of the work is arranged with reference to seasons, as "Life about our homes in the fall," and "Some forest trees in their winter conditions," while other sections deal with particular subjects, *e. g.*, "Geological action of water." Lessons about many of the common plants, birds, and mammals are presented in such an attractive style that even very young pupils will doubtless be entertained and instructed by following them. The author's aim is primarily to cultivate habits of observation; incidentally the pupil will obtain a great deal of valuable information.

The author says that in order to do good work it is not necessary that the teacher shall have taken a course in botany, zoology, or geology. It is possible that much good work may be done by some teachers who have not had such opportunities; however, it is beyond doubt that elementary science work in primary and secondary schools has suffered very greatly at the hands of teachers who have attempted to teach science subjects without having the necessary preparation for it. The book under discussion will certainly do much toward assisting weak teachers, but we insist that nothing short of thorough instruction in these sciences, added to ability to teach, can make teachers fully competent to handle nature study.—O. W. CALDWELL.

A satisfactory work on fertilizers.

THE marked increase in the use of commercial fertilizers in the United States has given rise to a demand for reliable information regarding the composition and utility of such goods. The official reports of those states which have laws regulating the sale of fertilizers give abundant analyses of mixed goods actually on the market, but the limits of such reports prevent any full discussion of the questions which arise in practice. A great mass of matter has been written in regard to feeding both plants and soils. Much of this matter is in the form of special pleading for some particular "system," and very little of it is recent or applicable to American conditions. The practical

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[4] LANGE, D.: Handbook of nature study. For teachers and pupils in elementary schools. 12mo. pp. xvi + 329, *figs. 60*. The Macmillan Company: New York. 1898.